

What is claimed is:

1. In a system including a first process and a plurality of second processes, a method comprising the steps, performed for each second process, of:

reading a first location from a card via the second process;

determining, in the first process, a second location responsive to a content of the first location; and

reading the second location from the first card via the second process.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the content of the first location includes a length.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the content of the first location includes a value characteristic.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the content of the first location includes a version ID.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein each second process is located in a respective checkout station.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein each second process is located in a respective checkout station and the method further includes sending a financial signal from the first process to the checkout station.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein sending includes sending to the second process.

8. The method of claim 1 further including sending a signal identifying a product from the checkout station to the first process.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the system further includes a third process, each located in a respective checkout station, and the method further includes sending a financial signal from the first process to the third process.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein sending includes sending via the second process.

11. A system comprising a plurality of consumer-held cards, each card including a list of value pairs, each pair including a signal indicating a length of the pair, one of the pairs including a discount coupon.

12. A processing system comprising:

a first processor; and

a plurality of second processors, each second processor including circuitry that reads a first location from a card, and reads a second location from the card, wherein the first processor acts to determine the second location responsive to a content of the first location.

13. The processing system of claim 12 wherein the content of the first location includes a length.

14. The processing system of claim 12 wherein the content of the first location includes a value characteristic.

15. The processing system of claim 12 wherein the content of the first location includes a version ID.

16. The processing system of claim 12 wherein each second processor is located in a respective checkout station.

17. The processing system of claim 12 wherein each second processor is located in a respective checkout station, and the first processor acts to send a financial signal to the checkout station.

18. The processing system of claim 17 wherein the first processor acts to send the financial signal to the second processor.

19. The processing system of claim 12 wherein the first processor includes circuitry that receives a signal identifying a product.

20. The processing system of claim 12 wherein the system further includes a third processor, each located in a respective checkout station, and the first processor acts to send a financial signal to the third processor.

21. In a system including a first process and a plurality of second processes, a processing system comprising:

means for reading a first location from a card via a second process in the plurality of second processes;

means for determining, in the first process, a second location responsive to a content of the first location; and

means for reading the second location from the first card via the second process.

22. The processing system of claim 21 wherein the content of the first location includes a length.

23. The processing system of claim 21 wherein the content of the first location includes a value characteristic.

24. The processing system of claim 21 wherein the content of the first location includes a version ID.

25. The processing system of claim 21 wherein each second process is located in a

respective checkout station.

26. The processing system of claim 21 wherein each second process is located in a respective checkout station and the processing system further includes sending a financial signal from the first process to the checkout station.

For the purpose of this document, the term "checkout station" is defined as a location where a customer's purchase is processed and payment is received.